



Slingerland

The holder I originally saw has a small problem with wobbling, due to inexact tolerances at the base. However, this problem has been solved, and the holder is now solid. The ball-and-cage is very smooth and holds position effortlessly. Slingerland's new tom-tom holder is a welcome change from their previous one. They deserve a tip of the hat for being perhaps the only company to realize that a long height tube is needed when mounting power toms! The 1982 holder retails alone at \$160.00.

TOM-TOMS

The 12 x 12 and 13 x 13 *Megatoms* have 12 lugs each; the 16 x 16 floor tom has 16. All have internal mufflers installed for both batter and bottom sides, along with Slingerland's unique curved hoops. The floor tom has three, thick hexagonal legs which locate into *Iso-Lok* lever brackets exactly like on the mounted toms. No chance for slippage with this system!

For some reason, the tension rods do not allow the heads to be slacked off much. When I tried to get a very deep sound, I noticed that the rods were very loose still threaded into the lugs, but loose enough to rattle.

The toms are fitted with *Pinstripes*, top and bottom. To me, Slingerland toms have always had a unique sound. They have lots of attack, along with a bubbly sound (at least with the *Pinstripe* heads). The three toms did have great volume, but it seems that the tuning range is somewhat limited.



SNARE DRUM

A 7 x 14 snare drum comes with this kit,

Slingerland has totally revised all their hardware and have been marketing the *May-EA* miking system in their catalogued drumkits. The entire kit is built in the USA (except for the stand bases, which I'm told will be made in the U.S. in the near future). Shells are 5-ply maple, with alternating thin and thick plies.

Components of the XM52 kit are: 16x22 bass drum, 12x12 and 13x13 toms, 16 x 16 floor tom, 7 x 14 wood snare drum, and *Magnum* hardware.

BASS DRUM

The bass drum has 20 separate lugs, and maple hoops. Slingerland has remained with their regular spurs, and fit two pairs onto this power bass drum. They are angled slightly forward, have spike tips and will disappear into the drum. With the advent of their new hardware series, Slingerland should take another look at their spurs. The steel rods just might be too flimsy for the weight of the drum with toms and holder attached. *Pinstripe* heads are fitted on both sides, and a felt strip is installed behind both heads.

Playing the drum as it came from the factory, I found it to be big-sounding, but overly resonant for my own tastes. Some padding placed against the batter head gave a nice, solid punch, while still retaining tone and volume.

MOUNTING SYSTEM

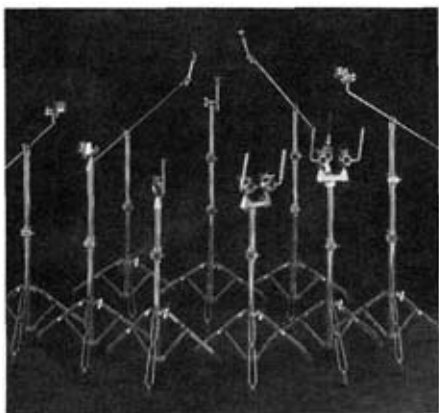
Slingerland has re-designed their tom-tom holder for increased sturdiness and set-up flexibility. The holder uses an extra-

long (21") single down post, which passes through a large, satin finished casting located near the front of the drum and raised in its center. A polyurethane block is tightly fitted inside the casting, thus eliminating metal-to-metal contact. One of the main features of this holder (and all the stands as well) is a new locking mechanism to secure the post. Slingerland calls this *Iso-Lok*, and it basically works on a clutch-type principle. A lever on one side of the base casting squashes the polyurethane piece around the height tube. Turning the lever upward 90° will release the tube all in a single motion. Working in conjunction with the *Iso-Lok* clutch is the *Superset* lock, which acts as a memory ring. It is keyrod-operated, and overlaps the entire raised part of the casting to provide accurate height set-up time after time.

Atop the height tube is a large cast piece which accepts separate holder arms. Hex rods locate into holes in this casting, anchored in place by small pins. Slingerland's ball-and-cage system has been redesigned for size and sturdiness. A large sprung wing bolt closes the cage around a black neoprene ball. When loosened, it provides 360° angle adjustment for practically any conceivable angle. Hex rods are also used for the L-shaped tom-tom arms. They can be adjusted with a T-screw for distance apart, as well as forward angle. The brackets on the toms utilize the same *Iso-Lok* lever clutch with an internal poly fitting. A small cut-out block inside the casting clamps to the hex arm when the lever is turned downward.

X M52 Magnum /May EA

having a 5-ply shell, 12 double-ended lugs, four ventholes, plus an internal muffler. The new *Slapshot* strainer is incorporated here. It's quite a large unit, allowing the snares to extend past the head. The snare unit attaches to the strainer with small set screws. Vertical snare tension is adjustable on the throw-offside only. There is also an adjustment knob to keep the snare strands under constant horizontal tension. The throw-off handle is a large, hand-sized ribbed plastic piece, and releases from the center of the unit to drop the snares evenly. The strainer on this particular drum may have needed some lubrication, as it required a bit of effort to engage or release the throw-off handle. This drum was somewhat brittle-sounding, even with its *Pin-stripe* batter and, like the tom-toms, the heads cannot be loosened up too much without rattling the rods and hoop. The snares vibrated quite a bit, and the only way to get rid of this was to choke the drum beyond recognition. It seems to me that the *Slapshot* would work a lot better if it were of the regular sort of drop strainer, without the parallel tension snare feature.



HARDWARE

All the stands in the new *Magnum* hardware line have double-braced tripod bases (triple-bracing is optional). Where the base adjustment surrounds the tube, there is a nylon ring set in between. The height joints all use the lever clutch with *Superset* lock cap. A quarter-turn of the lever is all that is needed to either secure or release the tube.

Two cymbal stands are included with the *XM52* kit, having two adjustable height tiers each. The stands have offset, extended

ratchet tilters, like on the now-defunct *Grandstands*. A piece of rubber tubing is used for a cymbal sleeve. The stands have more than ample height, are very sturdy, and will not tip over. The locking clutches are so strong, that it's impossible for the tiers to sink or twist.

The snare stand uses the typical basket design with carriage ring. The model I saw had a ratchet angle adjustment, but I'm told that this is being changed over to a ball. The *Magnum* stand has incredible stability, even when the drum is tilted forward. It will set up low enough to accommodate deep drums.

The *Magnum* hi-hat I saw had a Japanese-style split footboard with an adjustable toe stop. I have been informed that the footboard has since been changed to match the *Magnum* bass drum pedal. Tension relies on an externally housed compression spring, which is conveniently adjusted at the top of its casing. A metal strap is used for linkage. (There is a possibility it may be changed to a chain link.) The bottom cup has a lockable tilt screw; the clutch has a nylon tightener and metal counterlock washers. A knob spur is at the frame base. Action is a bit springy, but nonetheless, is very good and practically silent.

The *Magnum* pedal has a split, ribbed footboard with no toe stop. The frame is double-post, holding double expansion springs which are adjustable near the base. The adjustment knobs have "click-stops" which, besides holding the tension setting, also allow accurate identical tensioning of both springs. Linkage is a metal strap. The *Magnum* clamps to the drum hoop using a claw plate and swivel lever. Once the plate is initially adjusted for hoop thickness, the lever is all that is needed to mount and remove the pedal. There are sprung spurs at the base, and a wood beater is included. Action is springy and alive. The pedal itself is well-designed.

COSMETICS

Slingerland offers a large range of wood and plastic finishes. The kit tested here was seen in a superb Natural Maple gloss lacquer. All badges have serial numbers.

Slingerland includes a few neat things, which I should mention. First of all, there

is an owner's manual, and, they have packaged an Aquarian *Kwik-Key* with every drumkit. For drummers who constantly have to take down and set up their kits, the company has devised a color-coding kit for stands and holders. Different-colored caps fit onto key rods which are recessed in the stand height joints. A corresponding-color bar decal sticks onto the tube, and you can match sections of your stands by color for quicker set-up *nice ideal*

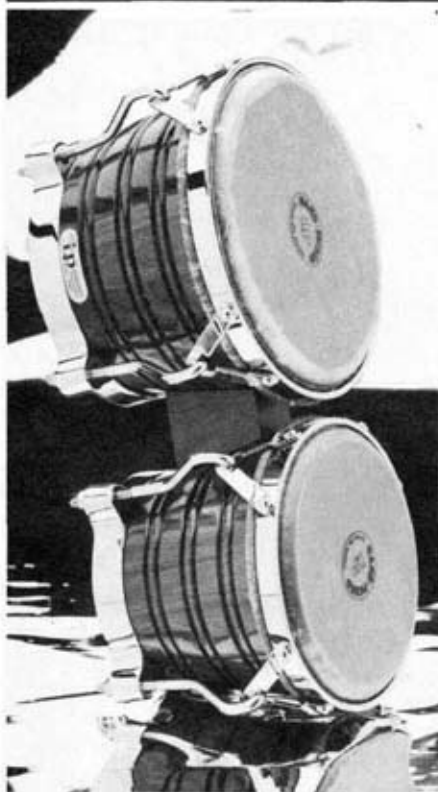


MAY-EA SYSTEM

The feature which sets this kit apart from the others is the installation of Randy May's *May-EA* internal miking system. Randy May is the drummer who, if you read your drum catalogs, invented Pearl's *Vari-Pitch* drums, and he has now formed his own company on the West Coast.

The *May-EA* (Electro-Acoustic) system uses a modified Shure *SM57* unidirectional cardioid microphone mounted *inside* each drum shell. The mic' has a hinged plastic shock-mount with an air membrane which surrounds the mic'. Thus, vibration is cancelled out. On the exterior of the drum shell is a knob with a recessed key-rod. This knob allows rotation of the mic' a full

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180 on its steel shaft, aiming the mic' at different locations in the shell for different tones and volumes. (The bass drum's shaft is longer, naturally.) The key rod does the main rotating, and the knob locks the position. (Note: the *Kwik-Key* included does not fit the space in the recess comfortably, but keys from some other manufacturers will.) Also mounted in the shell is a male XLR jack which will accept a low-impedance mic' cable. There seems to be a current controversy over the amount of hardware mounted in or on a drum shell, but I will leave that up to you.

Unlike conventional miking techniques, the *May-EA* mikes the internal acoustics of each drum separately. Since the internal sound is the sound being miked, I do question Slingerland's use of internal mufflers on the drums; we all know that internal devices can sometimes rattle and create a problem.

Immediately, some good points of the *May-EA* system can be realized. Microphone stands are eliminated, giving an uncluttered appearance. Mic' cables still hang, but since there are no mic's outside any of the drums, there is no way to accidentally hit a mic' with your stick. Set-up and tear-down time is greatly reduced, as all mic's stay inside the drums. (This is also a big deterrent to microphone theft!)

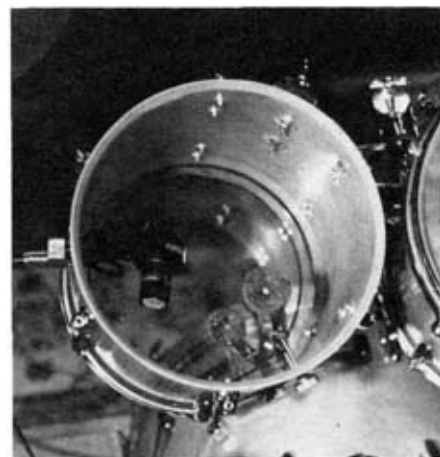
I brought the kit into the studio for testing in a recording situation. One drawback, depending how you look at it, is that you are "stuck" with the SM57 mic'. The engineer would not be able to use different mic's of his or her preference. However, if you like the sound and frequency curve of an SM57, then it's no problem. In the studio, phase cancellation and leakage of cymbals, as well as of other drums, are greatly reduced, since there are no "open" mic's in the sound field. Actually, each drum is its own room with its own inherent sound qualities.

The swivel mount on the mic' holder allows you to close-mike the batter head or various shell locations on one side of the drum. The engineer pointed out that instead of having a fixed radius, a telescopic arm might be nice, in order to extend the mic' throughout the shell to find the "sweet spot." The way the system is presently designed, mic' positioning cannot be varied to a large extent. Rotating the mic' on its shaft gave some different sounds. Close to the top head, it gave more attack; facing the shell gave a harder, more reflective tone. Facing the bottom permitted more resonant-head vibration and a deeper sound. I especially liked the bass drum sound once padding was placed inside. With the bottom heads removed, the sound was punchier, approximating the effect of a mic' shoved right up into a concert tom shell.

Using the kit live allows increased moni-

tor levels without feedback, since the mic's are shielded away from speakers. Also, there is reduced bleed into the drum channels from surrounding band members' amplifiers. As stated before, there are no mic' stands to tip over or move about, and there is no worry as to where to comfortably place the mic's and stands.

The factory choice of *Pinstripe* heads top and bottom may not be the optimum combination. As with any drumkit, experimentation is necessary to find the sound you want by way of heads, and in this particular case, mic' location.



The *May-EA* system is a good concept. Used on this Slingerland kit, the results are a cleaner, more isolated sound, but the drums do sound different than we are used to hearing them. The shock mounting is excellent, giving no vibration transmissions whatsoever. I expect there will be some refinements in the future. Perhaps Randy May could find a way to offer different microphone combinations for those who request it.

Any Slingerland drum kit may be ordered with the *May-EA* system installed. The mic's and mounting hardware can also be purchased separately for installation in an existing drumkit. (This would mean drilling holes in your shells.) The *May-EA* model 57 for snare and all toms retails at \$160.00; the bass drum model retails at \$170.00. The entire kit reviewed here with the *May-EA* lists at \$2865.00.

Slingerland has taken strides to regain players' confidence in American-made products, and with pleasing results overall. The *Magnum* hardware ranks with the best of them, and construction quality seems to be at an all-time high. The *May-EA* system is being used by some name drummers, including Chad Wackerman, drummer for Frank Zappa, who is quite particular when it comes to sound. It is an exciting idea, and players should be able to appreciate the clean look and ease of set-up. If you're a Slingerland fan, then the addition of the *May-EA* miking system makes for less headaches in getting your sound across. 